

Southside/Rolling Hills – August 17, 2010 Meeting Summary

Steering Committee Attendees:

Evan Covington Chavez, Ray Eurquhart, Joe Parker, Rev. Herman Graham, Jr., Lorisa Seibel, Marie Hunter, Camilla Faust, Deloris Baker Hargrow, Rick Pendergrass

Other Attendees:

Mayme Webb Bledsoe, Thomas Barr, Dionne R. Greenlee, Jim Wise, Mike Barros, Karl Schlachter, Wilmur Conyers, Juanita Massenburg, Tamesha Thompson-Eleanya, Michael Pullum, Larry Jarvis, Sandra Moore, Phillip Azar, Azzie Conley, Staila Huggins, Jeff Whitelow

- I. Welcome and Introductions** – Ray Eurquhart opened the meeting at 4:30 pm and welcomed Steering Committee (SC) members and other attendees. Mr. Eurquhart announced that Sandra Moore was asked to reassume her former role of facilitating the meetings. The Executive Committee would still decide the agenda items, and the Stakeholder Leadership Team would continue to operate with technical support from Urban Strategies. The rationale for this decision was that there is an enormous amount of time-sensitive work to be completed, and the group wished to work through these tasks as efficiently as possible, with adequate monitoring and accountability. Joe Parker commented that although the meetings were moving well, in light of Monday's news regarding the status of the tax credit application, the process to apply for tax credits next year would have to commence again. Given that a new application may be necessary, Ms. Moore was asked to step back in as facilitator to assist in keeping everyone on track. The agenda was altered to address the tax credit application as the next topic. Before going further, Mr. Parker requested introductions.
- II. Tax Credit Application Update** – Karl Schlachter began his update by reporting that the full application was submitted in May 2010. Unfortunately, the project was not approved for tax credit status due to something regarding the mixed income element of this project. A meeting at the Housing Finance Committee in Raleigh was to be held on Thursday, August 19th at 10:30 am, to determine exactly what the issue was and if the application could be amended to make required corrections. Larry Jarvis and members of the Executive Committee would review the application and the scoring to determine what happened, and what would be required for a new application. It was thought that the application would not require major corrections and that the design component seemed to be pretty solid. The application

could require minor language changes, or changes to the proposed loan structure. Mr. Parker asked if additional funding would be needed over the next 8-9 months? Critical questions to be addressed would be:

- 1) Why wasn't the application approved?;
- 2) What would need to be done differently next time?; and
- 3) If changes were to occur in the City's staff and legislative bodies, would we have to return to the City to discuss funding?

Mr. Schlachter commented that MBS and the City have worked closely with NCHFA to make changes to the tax credit program to allow mixed-income developments to compete at the same level as 100% low-income level housing initiatives. He expressed that this was a groundbreaking effort. Ms. Moore expressed that as a general proposition, the group must continue to think about the remaining work of the Committee to guide the revitalization and redevelopment of Southside/Rolling Hills.

- II. **Steering Committee Work Session** - It was recommended by Ms. Moore that perhaps a work session or retreat should occur for the group to "re-center" following feedback from Mayme Webb Bledsoe and the Southside Consensus team. The team completed surveys through house-to-house outreach visits. It would be necessary to reconvene to evaluate critical next steps. Everyone agreed to extend the regularly scheduled 3rd Tuesday meeting in September for this purpose. The work session/retreat would take place from 5-9 pm, following a shorter general SC meeting from 4-5 pm. Dinner would be provided. At that point, a complete report regarding the tax credit status would have been received for review. Additional details and pre-meeting materials are to be distributed.

ACTION ITEM: Convene a work session/retreat following the next scheduled SC meeting on Tuesday, September 21, 2010.

Mr. Parker further reiterated that the group should not plan on waiting to take further action in the neighborhood until the tax credit application is approved. Next steps can be implemented, and perhaps this should be further discussed at the upcoming work session. He expressed that since the last 8-9 months have focused on working on the Phase 1 tax credit application and perhaps it was now time to devote 90% of the group's efforts specifically to Southside programmatic initiatives.

- III. **Human Capital Program Update** – Mayme Webb Bledsoe announced that the Southside Consensus group had worked diligently in the community to organize future activities. She asked all present to stand to demonstrate who had spent extended amounts of time in Southside.

It was important to note that few in attendance, outside of the Southside Consensus group, had spent blocks of time there. Ms. Webb Bledsoe challenged all to consider that there were voices in the community that had not been heard. She announced that on Saturday, August 28, 2010, there would be a community and Southside Consensus meeting event, *Walk a Mile in my Shoes*. The meeting would allow all to gather together to listen to the feedback collected from the canvassing. Ms. Webb Bledsoe explained that community residents were interviewed, and out of 52 residents surveyed, 28 were homeowners. Everyone was invited to listen to residents, to take their opinions into consideration as the development of revitalization efforts continues. Ms. Moore expressed that this should be a requirement for all Steering Committee members.

ACTION ITEM: All should plan to attend *Walk a Mile in My Shoes*, on Saturday, August 28th from 10 am – 2 pm at the Southside Community Center.

IV. Sub-Committee Reports

- a. Program Outreach – Mr. Eurquhart expressed concerns that some in the community were selectively mailed fliers containing inflammatory information regarding the revitalization efforts. The flier indicated that the City planned to seize property, an action previously denied by Mayor Bell last fall. Mr. Eurquhart recommended that the SC draft a response. Ms. Moore suggested that others needed to attend any future meetings convened by these parties other than just Mr. Eurquhart and Marie Hunter.

Ms. Hunter also asked for additional help from the SC. Immediate needs included assistance with passing out fliers, calling residents, follow-up, and other efforts to get residents to attend meetings. SC member Evan Covington Chavez agreed to help with follow-up.

Rev. Herman Graham, Jr. stated that perhaps residents were not quite clear regarding this process, and that those operating outside of this group, at this stage, had created some agitation.

Mr. Eurquhart also expressed that there's some confusion regarding the actual geographic area involved. For example, would these efforts go as far as Sunridge Point? Mr. Parker voiced the concern that many wondered if this was a redevelopment process or a rehabilitative process, and what was the difference? Rev. Graham agreed that a clear description was needed to explain what constituted a redevelopment process, particularly something indicating that it didn't involve property seizure.

It was suggested that a flier could be created to individuals to the Southside Consensus website, with a map outlining the area, and explanations about the process.

Ms. Hunter thought that those in the community with dissenting voices have become very organized, pointing to the history of the Hayti, as well as the presence of many still vacant houses in the community.

Ms. Moore emphasized that during the retreat, the group would emerge with new strategies to address some of these concerns. Ms. Hunter also asked for help finalizing a strategy for the Saturday, August 21st event. There should be at least one spokesperson, volunteers (including SC members and partners from Habitat), and a flier for follow-up. In addition, a record of key points should be documented.

Ms. Covington Chavez suggested that SC representatives should attempt to attend any outside meetings. Mr. Parker praised the value of additional participation in any neighborhood gatherings, particularly to refute the perception that homes would be seized.

ACTION ITEM: Creation of an intensified outreach strategy for the remainder of the year at planned SC retreat.

Mr. Eurquhart reported that the Southside Resident Association was awaiting assistance from the City's staff person, Pamela Hagin. At the next partnership meeting, they would seek clarification to facilitate this. Southside requested assistance with a newsletter project and would like to establish a timeline for the first edition.

- b. Housing – Lorisa Seibel announced that they've received many requests for home improvement, including several addressed to Habitat. They'd received at least 20 requests for repairs, and this should be one of the highest priorities of the committee. There were urgent needs, i.e. homes with leaking roofs, broken windows, and floors falling in. Ms. Seibel asserted that with approximately \$150,000-\$200,000, most of these issues could be addressed. Thus, the funding should be requested. With future additional repair requests anticipated, the Housing Committee asked the SC to endorse this as a critical need. Perhaps if this initial allocation of funding was granted, a jobs training program for youth could be created where they could learn carpentry skills while performing various home repair tasks. Ms. Moore suggested that a long-term employment/training initiative could feature a YouthBuild

application, and this would be an appropriate action step for the Human Capital Committee. The SC supported the proposal and agreed to roll this discussion into the retreat action plan.

Phillip Azar asked that the group really take a step back to consider options pertaining to funding, and asked Mr. Jarvis about additional funding streams. Mr. Jarvis commented that they would investigate resources from the City's Community Development department.

Rev. Grant pointed out that it was important to have a detailed list of what has been accomplished up to this point. He commented that a consistent mechanism for reporting progress is needed, and that a communications strategy is important to gain extra momentum. Ms. Seibel agreed that a newsletter would be ideal.

- c. Human Capital – Mr. Eurquhart reported that there was a need for Co-Chairs of this committee. Mike Byrd unfortunately was not able to join, and Sandy Demeree has requested to step down. The Executive Committee wished to discuss this situation. With the Whitted School component rolled into this committee, this need must be addressed.

ACTION ITEM: Hold serious discussions during the retreat to determine an implementation strategy. With such a large body of work, how will this all be accomplished, and by what deadlines?

- V. **Participation in Steering Committee** – There were still challenges in attendance. Mr. Eurquhart suggested that they continue to encourage those who signed up for the committee to attend.
- VI. **Website Information** – No critical new updates were reported.
- VII. **Whitted School Update** – Mr. Jarvis expressed that the City was in a holding pattern regarding the school, which was good news. He also expressed that the challenge was still primarily a lack of funding to renovate. There was asbestos abatement money allocated for Whitted School, but it required spending before October 30th. The City also had some limited funding to address environmental issues associated with the school.
- VIII. **Review Critical Upcoming Dates and Event**
 - a. Saturday, August 21, 2010 → *Walk a Mile in My Shoes* Community Meeting, 10 am-2 pm @ the Southside Community Center
 - b. Tuesday, September 21 → SC Business Meeting and Retreat, 4-9 pm (Additional details forthcoming)

The meeting was adjourned by Ms. Moore.

Respectfully submitted by Dionne R. Greenlee